

The Past Perfect Simple and Continuous

The past perfect simple is used to say that one action happened before another action in the past.

It is often used for a sequence of actions.

For many months before the opening ceremony, I had thought about the honour of carrying the flag and had wondered who would be chosen. I had told myself it would never be me so I was very surprised when the team manager told me that I had been chosen.

It is used to talk about what happened before a time in the past.

Other members of the team smiled and said they had hoped I would be chosen.

My mother screamed when she saw me with the flag. She hadn't imagined I would be chosen.

The past perfect simple is **had + the past participle**.

Exercise 1

Put the verbs in brackets in the past perfect simple..

I studied English in Auckland, New Zealand for two years from 2002 to 2004. Before I arrived in Auckland, I a. (*think*) there would be sheep everywhere. I b. (*read*) that there were millions and millions of sheep in New Zealand and only around 3 million people.

After arriving, I realized I c. (*be*) quite wrong about Auckland! Auckland was a medium-sized city with shops, offices and a very tall building called the Sky Tower. One strange thing was that there were quite a few extinct volcanoes around the city. They d. (*be*) extinct for a long time.

Before meeting my host family, I e. (*imagine*) what living with them would be like. They f. (*send*) me photos of themselves but of course they looked a bit different in reality! My host father g. (*have*) brown hair when he was younger, but now he was bald. My host mother was very kind with smiling blue eyes and blond hair. They had one little girl, Rachel, and we soon became good friends.

My mother h. (*worry*) that I would be homesick, but my host family were very welcoming and friendly. I i. (*wonder*) whether I would be too shy to talk with them but that was not a problem. We often sat in their living room and I told them about my life in Seoul. I j. (*bring*) lots of photos with me and they looked at them and asked me questions.

I loved their house with a view of the ocean. Their garden was very big and they k. (*plant*) lots of flowers and some fruit trees. It rained quite a lot but I knew this already because one of my friends in Korea l. (*tell*) me that this was why New Zealand was such a green country.

I still write to my host family. I m. (*hope*) I would be able to remember all my English after returning home, but unfortunately I have forgotten bits of it. It is good though to look at my photos and imagine that one day I will go back there and see my host family again.



The past perfect continuous

The past perfect continuous is used to say that one action had been happening for a length of time before another action in the past.

I had been training for months when I fell and hit my head one night while out running.

When I regained consciousness I realized I had been lying on the sidewalk for at least twenty minutes.

I had been waiting for about two hours for them to give me their report, when finally, the door opened and they came in with serious faces.

The past perfect continuous is **had + been + the present participle**.

Exercise 2

Use the word prompts to make sentences. Put the verb in the past perfect continuous.

At last I saw you on the track.

I / look / for you / for ages!

b. You waved at me and smiled. You looked sweaty.

You / do / warmup laps

c. I couldn't believe that we were really at the Olympics!

We / dream / of this time / for so long

d. Before your race you looked very serious and solemn.

You / prepare / for this race / for the last five years

e. After the race I sat there, trying to calm down. I was exhausted.

I / say / to myself over and over, / "You can do it!"

f. When you were presented with your medal, I shouted and waved.

I / feel / sick and worried but not any more!

Answer Key:

Exercise 1

a. had thought, b. had read, c. had been, d. had been, e. had imagined, f. had sent, g. had had, h. had worried, i. had wondered, j. had brought, k. had planted, l. had told, m. had hoped

Exercise 2

a. I had been looking for you for ages!

b. You had been doing warmup laps.

c. We had been dreaming of this time for so long.

d. You had been preparing for this race for the last five years.

e. I had been saying to myself over and over, "You can do it!"

f. I had been feeling sick and worried but not any more!.

